

Kenyans fascinated by Ugandan culture

BY EDGAR R BATTE

The aroma of steaming *lu-wombo* drifted through the old coral-stone walls of Fort Jesus as guests gathered around a bustling Ugandan food stall. Their curiosity was drawn to banana leaves wrapped around chicken, beef and fish simmering in rich groundnut sauce. They could not wait to taste the Buganda royal dish for the first time.

For Ugandan exhibitor Hali-ma Namaganda, that moment carried deep meaning. Having lived in Mombasa for more than 10 years, she wanted to bring a piece of Uganda closer to the Kenyan coast during the Uganda Cultural Exhibition 2026.

"I thought, can't we do this again? I can bring home down to Mombasa with the taste of *lu-wombo* stew."

She prepared 100 packs of *lu-wombo*, a task she admits was not small. Banana leaves had to be sourced from Uganda and handled delicately before the slow cooking process began.

"The process of preparing and cooking was very hectic. But the love of showcasing my



Visitors get a taste of Ugandan coffee. PHOTO/EDGAR R. BATTE

motherland in food was bigger," Namaganda said in her smart *gomesi*.

Held inside the centuries-old UNESCO World Heritage site overlooking the Indian Ocean, the Uganda Cultural Exhibition 2026 brought together diplomats, tourism stakeholders, exhibitors and members of the public to celebrate culture, tourism and trade between Uganda and Kenya.

Visitors moved between stalls displaying Ugandan coffee, crafts and cultural artefacts as

traditional dancers performed to rhythmic drumbeats.

For Abraham Guyo, the event showed how Uganda and Kenya can complement rather than compete in tourism.

"Instead of selling just one destination, if operators sell a combined experience, it becomes more fulfilling for the customers," Guyo said.

As evening fell over Fort Jesus, shared food, dance and conversation gave Uganda a welcoming home away from home on the Kenyan coast.